drugs and Information Education Communication are being taken up in a phased manner.

- An Inter Ministerial Task Force has been constituted under Chairmanship of Secretary (H&FW) to ensure availability of drugs, vaccines and all other aspects for management of Avian Influenza in the country.
- National Institute of Communicable Diseases has been identified as the nodal agency for monitoring Avian Influenza and for investigating outbreaks. Under the aegis of ICMR, an Human Influenza surveillance network has been operationalized.
- The situation has also been reviewed by Committee of Secretaries (on a monthly basis) and Ministry of Home Affairs.

Cases in District Consumer Courts

*54. DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of new cases registered in various District Consumer Courts during 2004 in the country;

(b) the total number of old cases pending disposal as on 1st January, 2004;

(c) out of total cases, how many were disposed of during 2004 and whether the disposal was more than new registrations;

(d) whether inordinate delay is being caused in the disposal of consumer cases; and

(e) if so, the remedial measures intended to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) As per information made available by National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), the total number of new cases registered in various District Consumer Courts during 2004 in the country is 1,30,220. During 2004, 1,19,807 were disposed of. The total number of cases pending disposal, as on 01.01.2004, is 2,38,883.

(d) Delay in disposal of consumer cases is mainly due to non-functioning of certain District Consumer Fora on account of vacancies of Presidents/ Members, inadequate infrastructural facilities, non-establishment of additional District Fora where deemed necessary etc.

(e) Following important remedial measures for speedy disposal of cases have been taken by the Government;

(i) In order to promote e-governance, transparency, efficiency and systematizing of working of consumer fora and also to provide time bound delivery of justice to consumers, a project for computerization and computer networking of consumer fora throughout the country has been launched in March, 2005.

(ii) The following important provisions have been made in the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 through amendments which will facilitate quicker disposal of cases:

1) Provision for senior most Member to preside over the Consumer Forum if the President is absent for any reason.

2) Time frame has been prescribed for admission of complaints, issue of notice from the date of admission and complaints to be disposed off, as far as possible, within 90 days (within 150 days, where it requires testing).

3) Appeals to be disposed off as far as possible within 90 days.

4) Where a complaint/appeal has not been disposed of within the time period, reasons for the same should be recorded.

5) Ordinarily no adjournment is to be given. Adjournments can be given only when it is justified.

6) Once a complaint is admitted it shall not be transferred to any other Court/Tribunal.

7) Provision for service of notices by courier, fax, speed post etc.

8) Services utilized for commercial purposes are excluded from the purview of Consumer Courts.

9) Resignation of the President/Member to become effective only on acceptance, thereby ensuring that continuity of the functioning of the court is not affected.

10) Provision for continuing the proceeding from the stage where the case was last heard by the previous Member instead of starting *de novo* proceedings, where applicable.

11) Sitting Judge of the High Court to preside in meetings of the Selection Committee for selection of Members of State Commission as well as President and Members of District Fora, when President of the State Commission is absent for any reason.

12) Provision for reappointment of Presidents and Members of consumer fora having good track record so as to utilize their expertise.

(iii) State Governments have been requested from time to time not to allow the consumer fora to remain non-functional as also to provide adequate facilities.

(iv) NCDRC as well as Department of Consumer Affairs hold regular meetings/Conferences with Presidents of State Commissions and Secretaries in charge of Consumer Affairs of States/UTs to monitor and review the functioning of Consumer Fora in the country.

Task Force on drug price control

*55. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:

Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether present price control policy for drugs is blocking entry of new drugs and PM's Task Force on drugs has recommended fixing a ceiling on prices, which could be flexible and linked to wholesale price index;

(b) whether this Task Force headed by Shri Pronab Sen was set up to look into ways to make drugs available at reasonable prices;